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Spring 1984

Food News for Consumers

United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service

Popular Food Provides Good Nutrition, Few Calories

As summer approaches, we yearn to spend more time outdoors. Favorite outdoor pastimes include gardening, walking, volleyball and swimming--there's a speed for everyone. Another favorite summer activity centers around informal meals. When the aroma of the neighbor's outdoor cooking drifts over to our yard, we realize we're hungry too. What can we have that will be easy to prepare, tasty and nutritious?

Some of the most popular American meals--hamburgers, tacos, pizza, quiche and chef's salad--are flavorful, easy to prepare, and may contain foods from each of the basic four food groups: (1) protein foods--meat, poultry, fish, eggs and legumes; (2) fruits and vegetables; (3) dairy products; and (4) breads and cereals.

With a few variations, these favorite meals can be high in nutrients and lower in calories. For example, make that hamburger a cheeseburger, and add fresh green lettuce or other salad greens and a ripe tomato slice. To reduce calories, start with lean ground beef and low-fat process cheese. Use high calorie condiments sparingly.

Tacos are more nutritious and flavorful when meat sauce is topped with grated cheese, fresh tomatoes and shredded lettuce. To lower calories, use lean ground beef and drain the fat before adding it to the tomato sauce mixture. Top with low-fat process cheese.

Pizza can be high in nutrition and flavor. To increase the nutrients and lower the calories per serving, choose mozzarella cheese made from skim milk, add a generous amount of green pepper strips, and brown and drain the fat from lean ground beef and sausage before adding to the pizza.

Quiche is another high nutrient favorite with its basic ingredients of milk, cheese and eggs. Make it lower in calories by using low-fat cheeses; skim milk; your choice of lean ham, shrimp or crabmeat; and spinach or broccoli. A bit of pimento pepper makes it even more appealing.

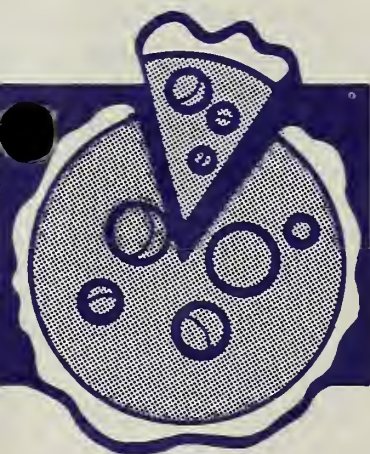
A chef's salad begins with salad greens and a variety of other fresh vegetables, and truly becomes a main dish with hard-cooked eggs, strips of cheese, lean ham, chicken or turkey and croutons. Reduce the calories by again choosing low-fat cheese and limit or eliminate rich salad dressings. Many commercially prepared reduced calorie dressings add a lot of flavor for the calories they provide. You may want to experiment with your own lower calorie dressings. The high-fat ingredient is the one to reduce. Try a dressing made with cottage cheese, buttermilk and herbs--a high nutrient return on the calorie investment.

The nutrition of these meals can be increased even further by making the accompanying beverage a glass of milk. Lower calorie versions are buttermilk and skim milk.

Calories and nutrients vary in these dishes according to serving size and specific ingredients. But these long-time favorites can be easily varied to be good nutrition choices for the calories they provide.

--Ann Collins Chadwick

(For more information, contact: Ann Collins Chadwick, Director, Office of the Consumer Advisor, Rm. 232-W Admin. Bldg., U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone: (202) 382-9681.)



Agriculture Crime Pays on the Spot

U.S. Department of Agriculture officials are literally making smugglers pay for their crime. Under a new procedure, inspectors with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service are fining--on the spot--those people they catch trying to sneak prohibited fruits, vegetables and meat products through the inspection process.

Until recently, smugglers didn't expect to be prosecuted or pay a fine. But with new civil penalties authority, APHIS inspectors now fine violators \$25 to \$50--on the spot. The new fine procedure has been tested at airports in Atlanta, Seattle and Philadelphia and at the U.S. Border Station in El Paso, Texas. APHIS has found the results of the new program encouraging, and the inspectors have been able to carry out the new procedure without slowing the flow of law-abiding travelers.

Since early March, about 500 people had been fined--many of them caught smuggling food across the Mexican border into the United States. Inspectors at El Paso report the fines are making an impact there and word of the new penalties is spreading, resulting in the deterrent effect they're aiming for.

One airport inspector overheard a passenger say, "The inspectors here are very strict." That's the exact message APHIS wants to get out. They're strict because they value this country's agricultural resources.



Many travelers don't realize the threat even one infested fruit or piece of contaminated meat can cause to American agriculture--and to everyone's food budget. A few insect maggots in a piece of fruit smuggled into an agricultural area and carelessly discarded could start an infestation similar to the Mediterranean fruit fly outbreak in California in 1981. That outbreak cost taxpayers \$100 million to eradicate.

Contaminated meat products could devastate the nation's livestock industry. The people of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, for example, had to kill every pig on their island to get rid of African swine fever.

Protecting America's agriculture from foreign pests and diseases is a huge job. In fiscal year 1983 more than 27 million travelers came into the United States in planes and ships, and about 40 million people crossed the border from Mexico. More than 256,000 significant pests were identified from a total of more than 1.2 million interceptions of prohibited materials. And 104,019 lots of prohibited animal products were seized from passenger baggage and destroyed.

Some advice to travelers who want to avoid an embarrassing, costly delay as they enter the United States: Declare all agricultural items. No one is going to get into trouble if they declare these items.

For more information, contact: Information Office, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rm. 1143-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone: (202) 447-3977.

Who can Answer Your Questions

If you have a question or a problem with the safety or wholesomeness of a meat or poultry product, or the truthfulness of its labeling, contact FSIS Meat and Poultry Hotline, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 472-4485.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service:

- Inspects and analyzes domestic and imported meat, poultry, and meat and poultry food products;
 - Establishes standards and approves recipes and labels for processed meat and poultry products; and
 - Monitors the meat and poultry industries for violations of inspection laws.
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Horsemeat, Kangaroo Meat or Beef?

When boxes of frozen meat labeled "boneless beef" arrive from overseas, U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors run a quick and inexpensive test--right at the dock--to determine if the meat really is beef. If the meat passes inspection, it moves quickly--primarily to fast food restaurants and processors who use it for TV dinners, bologna and other sausages, and canned meats.

The need for an on-the-spot test became apparent in 1981 when uninspected horsemeat and kangaroo meat was passed off as inspected Australian beef. That incident forced USDA to check samples from some 66 million pounds of meat--a time-consuming process taking 1-2 weeks to mail samples to the laboratory and get the results.

Recognizing the need for a quicker process, microbiologists with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service developed a fast test for species. It's called ORBIT, short for Overnight Rapid Beef Identification Test. Inspectors can read ORBIT's results in 24 hours--before a shipment of beef is ready to move from the dock. Only when ORBIT says the meat is not beef must laboratory tests be done to determine species.

ORBIT is not only fast and easy to perform, but it's also accurate and inexpensive--costing only about \$3 per sample. Although the test was developed for FSIS inspectors, other countries are using it as well. In addition, some firms in this country are interested in using ORBIT to check beef shipments for fraudulent substitution of cheaper meats or of poultry.

ORBIT is the latest inexpensive tool that's helping inspectors ensure that Americans have safe, wholesome, accurately labeled meat.

For more information, request the news feature "Test Tells Meat Species: Horse, Kangaroo or Beef? (289-84), or contact: Information Office, FSIS/ILA, Rm. 1160-S, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-9113.

USDA Prohibits Use of Mature Poultry Kidney in Human Food

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has halted the human food use of kidneys from mature chickens and turkeys, which are statistically almost certain to contain high concentrations of the heavy metal cadmium. Mature poultry account for less than five percent of all poultry slaughtered under federal inspection, however. Most ready-to-cook poultry and parts sold in retail stores are from young birds, which do not contain significant amounts of cadmium and are not affected by the regulation.

Cadmium is present in trace amounts in air, water and soil. Humans ingest it through the food chain by eating animals that feed on wheat, soybean, rice and other grains, which absorb cadmium from the soil. Because neither animal nor

human bodies excrete all cadmium ingested, cadmium residues in the kidneys tend to increase with age.

High levels of cadmium are associated with kidney disease, and levels of cadmium in human diets are approaching maximum levels recommended by international food and health organizations. Accordingly, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service is working closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to reduce levels of cadmium in the food supply.

Although kidneys from mature poultry have not been marketed separately, "mechanically deboned poultry" containing kidneys has been permitted in poultry frankfurters and other processed poultry products until now. However, under the new regulation, which took effect in February, the kidneys must be removed before the mechanical deboning process begins.

The regulation does not apply to kidneys from meat animals. Current data show small amounts of cadmium in beef, lamb and pork kidneys, but in lower amounts than in mature poultry kidneys. However, FSIS will continue to be alert to the presence of cadmium in organ meats and its health significance.

For more information, see Press Release #102-84, "USDA Prohibits Use of Mature Poultry Kidneys in Human Food" (1-30-84) or contact: Information Branch, Room 1160-S, ILA/FSIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-9113.

USDA Halts Meat Imports From Six Countries

In February, the U.S. Department of Agriculture halted imports of meat from six countries because of deficiencies in their inspection programs. The countries are: the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. Panama has since corrected the deficiencies and has been permitted to resume meat exports to the United States.

In December 1983, 14 countries were notified that they were about to lose eligibility to export meat products to the United States. However, several countries subsequently corrected deficiencies and demonstrated that their inspection programs are equivalent to those of USDA.

The 1981 farm bill requires countries shipping meat products to the United States to have inspection programs equivalent to those in this country, including residue testing programs and systems for preventing species violations--such as horsemeat misrepresented as beef. Eligibility for the five remaining countries will be promptly restored as soon as they overcome the shortcomings in their inspection systems.

For more information, see: "USDA Halts Meat Imports From Six Countries" (February 1984) or contact: Information Branch, Room 1160-S, ILA/FSIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-9113.

USDA Proposes New Inspection System For Young Birds

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is reviewing comments on a proposal for a new slaughter inspection system for use in many plants processing broilers and cornish hens. NELS--for New Line Speed--consists of a new inspection procedure and a partial quality control program.

The significant difference in the proposed procedure is that the plant would be responsible for identifying and trimming bruises and other defects, once the USDA inspector has passed a bird. Defects of this type are required to be

removed, although they do not mean that USDA must condemn the whole carcass. Under current procedures, the inspector identifies such defects, directs plant employees to trim them, then verifies that the trimming was done properly.

Plants using the new system would have to follow USDA-approved partial quality control programs to ensure proper processing of carcasses. These written programs, unique to each plant, require plants to periodically check both carcasses and processing procedures at critical points and to record findings for USDA monitoring.

NELS has been tested and found as effective as current inspection procedures in maintaining consumer protection. It could greatly increase inspection efficiency, allowing inspection of as many as 91 birds per minute, compared with the maximum of 70 birds per minute now possible.

For more information, see Press Release #62-84, "USDA Proposes New Line Speed Inspection System for Broilers, Cornish Hens" (1-19-84) or contact: Information Branch, Room 1160-S, ILA/FSIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-9113.

How to Obtain Free Copies

Single free copies of press releases, Federal Register reprints, studies, fact sheets, and publications mentioned in the FSIS section of this newsletter are available from FSIS Public Awareness, Room 1163-S, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Phone: (202) 447-9351.

USDA's Agricultural Research Service:

- Ensures high-quality food and fiber for Americans and for export—in areas of:
 - Food safety and quality;
 - Natural resources conservation;
 - Human nutrition;
 - Productivity of plant crops and of livestock; and
 - Farm product marketing.

New Carrot Hybrid Excels in Flavor and Nutrition

A new carrot hybrid providing more nutrition and better flavor is ready for home gardeners and commercial production. The hybrid--called A Plus--has 76 percent more carotene than the carrot variety most widely grown now in California. The human body uses carotene to make vitamin A.

Developed by scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, the hybrid also received high marks from taste panels. The panels preferred A-Plus over eight other commercial hybrids. Commercial trials are now underway to determine consumer acceptance of A Plus carrots.

The ARS researchers estimate that 40 to 60 percent of the carotene in A Plus is the beta-carotene form, which is most useful in forming vitamin A. An average California-grown A Plus carrot, weighing about 3.5 ounces, contains nearly 15,000 micrograms of carotene. This would provide two and one-half times the carotene needed to produce the 1,000 micrograms of vitamin A most people need daily.

ARS researchers say there is no danger of carrots providing too much carotene. While vitamin A that is contained in fish oils could be toxic if taken in large doses, the carotene in carrots is non-toxic. Consuming large quantities



of carrots high in carotene could increase carotene levels in blood plasma to unusually high levels, but it would not be harmful.

Some companies have begun limited production of the carrots, and seeds are available for home gardeners through catalogue and packet distributors.

For more information on A Plus, contact: Clinton E. Peterson, USDA-ARS, Department of Agronomy/Horticulture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisc. 53706, telephone (608) 262-1830.

Zinc Deficiency In Rats Retards Brain Development

In a study that could have implications for humans, scientists found that memory and learning impairments appeared in the offspring of laboratory rats whose diet during pregnancy and nursing were mildly deficient in zinc. The impairments continued into the offsprings' adult years, according to scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service.

In both rats and humans the hippocampus area of the brain normally has high concentrations of zinc, a trace mineral essential for the formation of nucleic acids and protein. However, researchers found the hippocampus area in the experimental offspring deficient in zinc and less well developed.

The scientists caution that they do not know if zinc deficiencies occur in human fetuses or whether such deficiencies might interfere with hippocampus development during pregnancy and postnatal periods. But they suggest that it might be prudent for pregnant women to consume food rich in zinc. Good sources of zinc include oysters, variety meats such as liver or beef heart, other kinds of beef, dark poultry meat and crab.

The researchers emphasize that once the brain is fully developed in a rat or child, it is difficult to cause injury by poor nutrition. However, if zinc deficiency occurs early in life, during the critical period of brain development, normal growth and maturation might be irreversibly impaired.

For more information on zinc deficiency, contact: Edward S. Halas, Human Nutrition Research Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Grand Forks, N.D. 58202, telephone (701) 795-8458.

Genes Open Way to Longer Shelf Life for Soybean Oil Products

Scientists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently discovered soybean genes that might provide the key to developing soybean oil and soybean products that stay fresh longer. Breeding the newly discovered genes into soybean plants could help curb off-flavors and objectionable odors caused by the breakdown of unsaturated fatty acids. This would control losses from rancid-damaged foods derived from soybeans.

The main culprit behind the twin problems of bad flavor and odor is linolenic acid, a highly unstable ingredient in soybean oil. The scientists found the new genes help produce a mutant soybean plant with beans containing only about one-third as much linolenic acid as conventional soybeans. This would help

preserve soybean-derived foods, such as margarine, salad dressing and cooking oil. The researchers, however, do not want to remove linolenic acid completely since it is an essential fatty acid for human nutrition.

This research could have significant implications for the world food supply since worldwide consumption of soybeans shows a continuous upward trend.

For more information on soybean research, contact: Dr. James R. Wilcox, USDA-ARS, Lilly Hall of Life, Sciences Bldg., Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind. 47907, telephone (317) 494-4772.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service:

- Operates a variety of marketing programs and services—several of interest to consumers—that include:
 - Developing grades and standards for the trading of food and other farm products and carrying out grading services on request from packers and processors;
 - Inspecting egg products for wholesomeness;
 - Administering marketing orders that aid in the marketing of milk, fruits, vegetables and related specialty crops like nuts; and
 - Administering truth-in-seed labeling and other regulatory programs.
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USDA Certifies Meat Served at Summer Olympics



The Olympic athletes in Los Angeles this summer will be eating 340,000 pounds of high-quality beef, lamb, pork, veal and calf certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as being in compliance with official U.S. institutional meat purchase specifications. The International Olympic Games Committee placed orders for the meat for July delivery just before the start of the games. Grading supervisors with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service have developed plans for providing the necessary certification services to meat suppliers. The certifications will ensure that meat quality is maintained and that serving portions are uniform. For more information, contact: Information Office, Agricultural Marketing Service, Rm. 3529-S, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-6767.

Survey May Beef Up Cattle Industry

What quality of beef do most Americans prefer? That will soon be known--after the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Texas A&M University finish a preference survey now underway to determine the kind and quality of beef that consumers like best.

Meat specialists have selected beef cuts from the quality grades--Prime down to U.S. Standard--to determine consumer preferences in four major cities--Philadelphia, Kansas City, Houston and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Results of the survey will give cattle producers the market guidance they need to help determine how breeding and feeding techniques can provide consumers with the quality of beef they want.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service sets quality grades for beef. There are eight grades with U.S. Prime, U.S. Choice, U.S. Good and U.S. Standard being the top four. U.S. Prime has the most marbling and is the ultimate in tenderness, juiciness and flavor; U.S. Choice has less marbling and is less tender than U.S. Prime; U.S. Good and Standard are usually house brand names and may require slow, moist cooking to make the meat tender.

For more information about the survey, contact Jim Toomey, Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program, Agricultural Marketing Service, Rm. 0608-S, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-2704.

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service:

- Maintains USDA's Nutrient Data Bank;
 - Conducts the Nationwide Food Consumption Survey;
 - Monitors nutrient content of the U.S. food supply;
 - Provides nutrition guidelines for education and action programs;
 - Collects and disseminates food and nutrition materials; and
 - Conducts nutrition education research.
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Choosing Menus that Make Food Dollars Count



Nutritionists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Human Nutrition Information Service have developed two-week menus with food lists and recipes for a family of four. These meal plans are presented in "Making Food Dollars Count--Nutritious Meals at Low Cost" to help low-income families shop and plan for well-balanced meals that cost no more than the food stamp allotment for a family of four with no income. "Making Food Dollars Count" outlines how low-income families can get the nutrients they need at less cost than a national survey conducted by USDA indicates they usually spend.

To improve nutrition while cutting cost, families would have to shift more of their food dollars to purchases of bread and cereals, vegetables and fruits, milk and milk products, and dry beans. One or more of these food groups are economical sources of certain nutrients--calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, and the B vitamin, folacin--that came up short in the diets of many of those surveyed.

"Making Food Dollars Count--Nutritious Meals at Low Cost" (405-L), is available for 50 cents from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colo. 81009.

Advisory Committee to Review Dietary Guidelines

What should an already healthy person eat to stay healthy? The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee will consider that question when it meets in Washington, D.C., May 22-23 to review "Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans" (HG-232).

This 20-page booklet--issued jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1980--recommends diets and foods that foster good health, according to officials with USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service.

The advisory committee will determine if the guidelines outlined in "Nutrition and Your Health" should be revised based on recent nutrition research and on comments from the public and nutritionists and food science professionals. The committee consists of nutritionists and other food experts selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Academy of Sciences.

"Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans" can be ordered from: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Refer to publication number 001-000-04248-3. Cost is \$2.25 for single copies, \$27.00 for 100 copies.

For more information on the guidelines or the meeting, contact: Johna Pierce, Human Nutrition Information Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rm. 365, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782, telephone: (301) 436-8617.

Food Purchasing Guide for Institutions Revised

Estimating food purchases for institutional meal preparation can be done easily with the newly revised "Food Purchasing Guide for Group Feeding," Agriculture Handbook No. 284. Quantity purchasing guidelines for 100 food portions are given for about 770 foods, including many newly marketed products. Portion sizes and purchasing units are in customary and metric measures. The food purchasing handbook is available for \$5.00 from: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Refer to stock number 001-000-04353-6.

USDA's Economic Research Service:

- Analyzes international activities of agricultural significance;
- Does research on commodities, food and nutrition, natural resources, and rural development; and
- Furnishes timely and objective economic and statistical information to farmers, other rural Americans, industries, consumers, and policy-makers.

Dining Out, America's Favorite Pastime

Eating out--for business, pleasure or necessity--has increased dramatically in the last decade. About 90 million meals or snacks are served every day in American restaurants, fast food outlets and cafeterias, according to economists with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

These eating establishments, numbering about 231,000 nationwide, comprise what analysts of the foodservice industry call "separate eating places." After adjusting for inflation, meal and snack sales in separate eating places increased 81 percent from 1966 to 1979.

The ERS economists base their findings on a 1978-80 survey of 2,272 foodservice establishments in 48 states. The survey, conducted by the International Foodservice Manufacturers Association, collected information on industry structure and organization, the quantity of foods ordered by the



establishments and the use of equipment and nonfood supplies. The results, however, reveal much more about America's fondness for dining out.

The increase really began in the early 1960's. Steadily increasing incomes, smaller households, greater mobility, more women in the workforce and convenience were responsible for drawing Americans out of the kitchen.

In total numbers, the growth of separate eating places show an increase of only 15 percent--from 201,734 in 1966 to 231,018 in 1979. However, this modest increase obscures major changes that occurred in the structure and organization of separate eating places during that period. Among the changes are the growth of fast food outlets, franchise firms and large chains, increased menu specialization, and the decline in sitdown restaurant service.

While the number of restaurants that provided sitdown service dropped six percent between 1966 and 1979, the number of fast food outlets jumped 82 percent. More of these outlets are featuring limited, specialized menus, a trend likely to continue.

Will the foodservice industry continue its growth? Another 18 percent increase in real sales of meals and snacks away from home is likely by 1985. The rate of expansion may cool, however, especially for fast food firms which have glutted some marketing areas in recent years. This means the foodservice industry may have to compete harder for the consumer's food dollar. Also, steeper costs for food, labor and energy may increase menu prices and blunt sales somewhat.

For more information, contact: Michael Van Dress, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rm. 252, 500 12th St. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250, telephone (202) 447-6363.

Food Consumption Among Americans Drops

Americans consumed an average of 1,387 pounds of food per person in 1982. That's down about seven pounds from 1981 and down 18 pounds from 1980. Since 1962, consumption figures per person have ranged from a low of 1,368 pounds in 1974 to a high of 1,421 pounds in 1979.

A variety of information on American eating and food spending habits can be found in "Food Consumption, Prices, and Expenditures, 1962-1982," a report compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. It serves as a comprehensive source of food consumption, price and expenditure statistics for the last 20 years.

The publication's 103 pages of data tables show, for example, that crop products dominated the 1982 menu at 814 pounds per person, compared with 574 pounds of animal products. Twenty years ago, the margin was narrower--767 pounds of crop products, compared with 609 pounds of animal products. In addition, the report reveals higher food prices and population growth boosted consumer food expenditures in 1982, as total food spending by Americans rose 6.3 percent to \$350 billion.

"Food Consumption, Prices, and Expenditures, 1962-82," can be ordered from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for \$4.00 (\$5.00 for foreign orders). Refer to GPO Stock No. 001-000-04378-1.



USDA's Food and Nutrition Service:

- Administers food programs, including:
 - The food stamp program;
 - The national school lunch and school breakfast programs;
 - The special supplemental food program for women, infants, and children (WIC); and
 - The food distribution, child care food, summer food service and special milk programs.
-

School Lunches Best Food Value for Children



Two generations of American school children have enjoyed the benefits of free and reduced-price school lunches made possible through the National School Lunch Program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

Operating in nearly 98 percent of the nation's public school districts, the program serves 23.3 million students in 91,000 schools daily, and continues to safeguard the health of the nation's children through good nutrition.

USDA's National Evaluation of School Nutrition Programs looked at the effects of school nutrition programs on 7,000 school children and their parents, and found that students who eat school lunches have higher intakes of energy and more nutrients than students who do not. The survey also found that school lunch children showed superior intakes of vitamins A and B6, calcium and magnesium--specific nutrients often deficient in the school-age population.

For more information, contact: Gene Vincent, Office of Public Information, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, Va., telephone (703) 756-3286.

Food Flow to Needy Increases in 1983

The U.S. Department of Agriculture donated over 780 million pounds of free food to the needy in 1983, increasing both the amount and variety of food products available to eligible persons. Worth over \$1 billion, the donations represent a four-fold increase over the amount of food given away in 1982.

The food donations included 392 million pounds of process cheese, 92 million pounds of Cheddar cheese, 174 million pounds of butter, 45 million pounds of nonfat dry milk, 14 million pounds of rice, 25 million pounds of cornmeal, 25 million pounds of honey and 15 million pounds of flour.

These food donations were made through the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, one of the many programs under the Food Distribution Program administered by USDA.

For more information, contact: Susan Acker, Office of Public Information, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, Va., telephone (703) 756-3286.

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